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# Moving from Self to Community: An Investigation of Nonverbal Communication Through Improvisational Dance

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**Moving from Self to Community:  
An Investigation of Nonverbal Communication  
Through Improvisational Dance**



by  
Maia Draper-Reich

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Connecticut College  
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**Note about Gender Pronouns:** When referring to a singular individual in my writing, I have elected to use the pronouns “they/them/theirs.” I intend for these to be a nonspecific terms inclusive of all gender identities.

## Introduction

Through my experiences in various dance education settings, I have encountered and witnessed the ways in which moving together shapes community. The act of movement practice, both as an individual in a group setting, and as a collaborative group working together, builds closeness between people and a sense of group unity. Much of this has to do with the ways that trust and understanding are cultivated through physical activity and the general witnessing of the moving bodies of individuals. I have had countless experiences in a dance class or movement improvisation setting where I felt I gained a clear sense of another person's character without speaking with them or getting to know them through conversation. A distinct knowledge is gained through participation in movement activities with a group and observing the movement of others, which furthers opportunities for trust and interpersonal relationships. The building of such relationships ultimately leads to a sense of community; a group feels unified as a result of moving and observing others' movement because of the communicative power of these actions. With these experiences in mind, I seek to gain a deeper understanding of human capacity for nonverbal communication and how it is perceived both consciously and unconsciously. This project is an investigation of the ways in which nonverbal physicality reveals the person and facilitates dialogue between the individual and a greater community through pedestrian and creative improvisational movement forms.

By observing the motion of another individual, one can gain a vast amount of information about the character of that person and their particular emotional state in that present moment. The nature of the corporeal knowledge transferred by the mover to the observer is multifaceted and complex as "movement embodies socially constructed cultural knowledge in which

corporeality, emotion, and abstraction are intertwined,” (Sklar, 1994, p. 12). Two elements of physical communication that exemplify this complexity are facial expression and what is commonly referred to as “body language.” These two categories of communication are culturally specific uses of the muscular, skeletal, and neural systems to convey emotion. As with the arbitrary sounds that make up verbal language, cultures have assigned meaning to specific shapes and textures of the face and other body parts. The connection between a physical position or movement and its emotional content is abstract. However, like verbal language, the embodied emotional content is engrained in modes of processing because humans are raised in a specific culture. The conceptualization of physicality as meaning is fundamental to the point that a physical change in emotional expression can alter brain chemistry. A real difference in emotional state can result as directed by the assigned meaning of the physical change. For instance, when facial muscles engage in the actions associated with a specific emotion, such as frowning or smiling, the individual’s emotional state shifts to correspond with what their face is physically representing (Lewis, 2012). There are distinct, if abstract, associations between physicality and emotional content, which are utilized with great frequency in human communication.

Furthermore, understanding of culturally shared meaning feels instinctual due to how we learn to use our senses to read it. Perception of meaning may occur through vision, touch, and/or embodiment. An individual can gain clear comprehension of the emotional state of someone else through active imitation of their physicality (Reich, 1972). This applies to both movement and stillness; the rigidity, or held muscular tension, of a body can be distinguished through imitative embodiment as well. The instinctual understanding of corporeal knowledge people

have can be explained in part by the fact that physical expression preceded verbal communication. Although daily interactions of our modern culture are facilitated primarily by verbal language, humans lived as functional organisms prior to the development of speech and language systems. Language is limited in that it is derived in order to communicate the internal experiences of movements and sensations: “...the words that describe emotional conditions *directly* reflect the corresponding expressive movement of the living organism” (Reich, 1972, p. 358). Physical states of being exist that cannot be described verbally. Perception and communication within the specific cultural framework of physical meaning largely occurs subconsciously. Visual and sensory cues received from others are processed and provide a sense of knowing. This knowledge may or may not be able to be verbalized, however this type of information exchange happens with great frequency amongst pairs and groups of people.

Central to the body’s capacity for communication is the concept that each individual has a body with a unique history. This history includes all physical experiences including daily movement, specific physical trainings, and injury, illness, or physical trauma, as well as emotional experiences that have influenced a person’s physicality. Past bodily experiences have shaped an individual’s physicality in terms of appearance, capacity for movement, habits, and comforts. These physical characteristics ultimately have an effect on the personality and character of the conscious individual inhabiting the body. There is a continuous loop of influence as physical history impacts a person’s emotional experiences and vice versa. This combined history is inseparable from the movement of the individual and therefore contributes to what is perceptible to others through physical communication in interpersonal relationships and community activity.

The physical body communicates as a result of the personal history of the individual, and the possibilities of corporeal knowing. Whether or not individuals are consciously aware of the ways their physical history is perceptible to others or not, the physical body is representative of its history and therefore provides information through all movement and expression. Similarly, whether an individual is conscious of the knowledge they gain from observing another person's physicality or not, humans instinctively absorb information and acquire corporeal-based knowledge from those around them. The physical body is actively sending and receiving information at all times; therefore physical communication occurs between individuals. People are constantly and simultaneously communicating information about themselves through their unique physicalities and receiving information about others, which increases closeness of interpersonal relationships.

In intentional group settings, such as movement workshops, the constant nonverbal transfer of corporeal knowing builds connections between individuals. These connections occur because people are both moving and actively observing the movement of others. The development of relationships ultimately can build a unified group with an increased sense of overall closeness. Individual expression of the self by movers and perception of their physical information by observers establishes community. Each group member completes both roles. Through sending and receiving physical communication, people gain a sense of belonging within the group and a familiarity with the other individuals. Furthermore, a group sense or dynamic is established as the collective corporeal knowledge is more clearly understood.



## **Elements of the Connection between the Mind and the Body**

The unique physical history of an individual is the result of the essential and complex connection between the body and the brain. The body is the vessel through which humans experience the world; our sensory systems serve as the modes of input for all information sent to and stored in the neural system. Therefore, the physical body's experiences influence how neural pathways are formed and maintained. Much of learning-induced brain development occurs in childhood; however, research has shown that opportunities for neuroplasticity continue into adulthood, beyond anatomical change due to aging or disease (Draganski et al., 2004). The morphology of the brain is continually shaped by our life experiences, which are all perceived with our physical senses.

Furthermore, humans bodies are composed of multiple biological systems that facilitate action. Humans move either in response to logistical environmental information, or are directed by a neural-based desired outcome referred to by neuroscientist and physiologist Nikolai Bernstein as “a model of the desired future,” (Feigenberg et al., 1996, p. 257). The central nervous system can form a desired action goal from the current sensory input, memory of past similar experience, and the needs of the individual. Someone can extrapolate from their past and current information to encode an image of immediate future action and the motor mechanisms required, as well as the resulting transformation of the situation (Feigenberg et al, 1996). The ability to envision an immediate desired future is the reason people are able to imagine the physicality involved and energy required in completing an action. For example, humans capable of running can envision sprinting ten steps forward, and can then feel every muscle prepared to do so without ultimately pursuing the action. A model of the desired future action incorporates

conscious and unconscious personal knowledge of one's physical capabilities whether or not based on memory of directly applicable previous experience. Individuals have specific manifestations of this ability based on their understanding and experience of their physicality.

The physical body is the medium through which the action of life is performed; therefore memories of life experiences have physical manifestations. In dance, sports, other physical trainings, and daily movements, the term "muscle memory" is often used to refer to the embodied ability to perform motor tasks without conscious thought. Rather than the muscular system having the ability to hold memory, the term refers to the neurology of "procedural memory" or "motor memory," which permits automatic or spontaneous motor function as a result of intentional physical training or unconscious habitual learning (Shusterman, 2011). The re-enforcement of the neuromuscular pathways involved in connecting the brain with physical action can form both positive and negative unconscious habits of movement and rigidity. Such pathways are not permanent; heightened consciousness and pointed muscular and physical trainings can alter the implicit memory that serves in movement tasks. However, individuals have a specific set of muscular and movement-related habits as a result of ingrained physical trainings and repeated daily movements.

In addition to the typical ways we conceptualize neurological memory, the physical tissues of the body play a role. Experience and the memory of experience can lead to armoring or a distinct held muscular tension (Reich, 1972). Physical rigidity indicates an inhibition of the the body's emotional language and can present, for example, through pulled back shoulders, thrust out chest, rigid chin, suppressed breathing, immobile pelvis, and rigidly stretched out legs among other expressions (Reich, 1972). Such physical manifestations occur through held

tension over time as a result of embodied anxiety, anger, or repression. Mental processing and psychic alleviation of the experiences that induced these emotional states often cannot occur without corresponding relaxation and biophysical release of tension (Ogden, 2009). In this way, there is somatic manifestation of personal history of emotional states such as anxiety, anger, and general repression.

A clear example of unique physical experience leading to physical holding is evident in the reduced movement range utilized by visually impaired people. As a result of the reduction or lack of sight, there are often great and constant fears of pain and social embarrassment regarding physical and societal navigation, which are both largely determined by sight (Paxton et al., 1993). Vision informs situation-specific behavior such as posture, position in relation to others, hand gesture, and walking and running “correctly,” in addition to basic location information. Constant anxiety regarding physicality causes visually impaired people to have restricted movement patterns with varying levels of extremity. This patterning is a result of situation-specific repeated responses. For example, once a blind person arrives at a physically safe place, the tendency is to remain there until guided to the next safe place. Moving independently is scary both physically and socially, so visually impaired people will often remain in a state of stillness until given other information (Paxton et al., 1993). The lifelong habits of stillness can cause individuals to withdraw inward psychologically, which affects their outward personalities. On the other hand, visually impaired people often have heightened ability in their other senses, which could make available movement habits and abilities that are different from sighted individuals. Unsighted people offer an extreme example of how the individual ways people experience the world through their physical senses impact movement capabilities,

but, generally, all people exhibit unique physicality as a result of individual life experiences. Neuromuscular pathways have developed in specific ways that shape movement range and ability, as well as muscular habits. As a result, each person has a unique embodied history, elements of which are engaged every day through the movement and stillness of daily action.

The mind-body connection is essential in the perception of others. Knowledge of the connections between our physicality and our consciousness facilitates understanding of other people through corporeal communication. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty sought to understand the mind-body connection in interaction through the concept of phenomenology, or the study of objects of perception and what the senses and mind notice. One first perceives another body as an object like any other element of the surroundings. We are able to infer that other bodies have consciousness only because we know and experience our own consciousness. The two modes of perception, body as object and body as containing consciousness, integrate to provide information based on the physical body or bodies in front of us; we are able to read the expression of the body as an object in action and deduce the emotional content of the consciousness housed within it (Merleau-Ponty, 1981). As a result of instinctual perception of the objects around us, including bodies, people together within a space are engaging in communication: “In so far as I have sensory functions, a visual, auditory and tactile field, I am already in communication with others taken as similar psycho-physical subjects,” (Merleau-Ponty, 1981, p. 353). One aspect of this perception is that the presence of another person immediately alters the perceptual context of other objects and elements of the environment: “they are no longer simply what I myself could make of them, they are what this other pattern of behavior is about to make of them,” (Merleau-Ponty, 1981, p. 353). Our

perceptions change when another person provides another viewpoint to consider. The described mental perception occurs through the physical senses as they are the basis of all experienced reality. Additionally, an observer's object of perception is the behavior and action of the mover. As a result of our understanding of the emotional content of our own movements, meaning can be assigned to the mover's actions. Our constant experience of the connection between our consciousness and physicality facilitates the understanding of others when we are in the observing role.

### **Communication through Touch**

Touch communication is unique from physical communication that is perceived visually or through embodiment. Touch is the most direct form of nonverbal communication. The skin is the largest organ of the body and the biological system that is essential to the other senses; the skin lines the nostrils, ears, mouth, and parts of the eye thereby facilitating their functions. In terms of physical history, touch is the first sense to develop in utero and human embryos respond to touch stimulation at six weeks old (Montagu, 1986). Early prenatal development is one indication of the fundamental necessity of touch for human life. Fetuses respond to the stimuli of the constant massaging by the amniotic fluid and touch given to the mother's abdomen throughout pregnancy (Field, 2014). Early sensory development of the skin is a biological necessity for the fetus to regulate itself in response to its dynamic womb environment, which undergoes physical changes, chemical shifts, and fluctuations in temperature (Montagu, 1986). The early need for the touch sense causes touch functions to be deeply embedded in the earliest pathways of human neurology.

Touch is an essential mode of communication in early development. In particular, the quality and amount of touch given to an infant by parents and caregivers directly impact social, cognitive, and physical development (Hertenstein et al., 2009). Touch is the primary way that infants and toddlers learn about both their environment and their social relationships. Successful development of the sense of touch is necessary for development of the other senses and modes of perception and communication. Lack of such engagement and use of the sense of touch during early childhood can lead to developmental difficulties, such as cognitive and neurodevelopmental delays (Field, 2014). As a result of the importance of touch in infancy and childhood, adults remain highly attuned to the information that can be communicated between people with touch sensations. For instance, through touch we can accurately communicate emotion nonverbally among adults; participants in a study by Hertenstein et al. were able to successfully convey a specific emotion, such as happiness or sadness, through touch with the whole body to an unfamiliar individual (2009). Even as verbal communication comprises much of the discourse between people, touch and its communicative abilities remain widely understood and utilized in a multitude of situations. Due to the touch sense being fundamentally embedded in human neurology, it serves as a familiar and useful mode of communicating and understanding. As the earliest form of communication perceptible to infants, touch is and continues to be an effective method of exploration and comprehension of immediate surroundings, and people and relationships.

The psychology of touch is also influenced by the social conventions of touch. Just as with visually perceptible communication, physical contact has culture-dependent assigned meaning. Variance occurs on a wide cultural level as well as on a familial level or in another

individual development-specific context (Montagu, 1986). There are differences in the amount and types of touch both given and received by individuals depending on their sociological roles, such as gender and socioeconomic status (Field, 2014). One role of touch is as a method of maintenance for many types of social relationships. There are different culturally defined permissible areas of touch depending on the nature of the relationship (Suvilehto, 2015). These types of communication function within an interpersonal relationship and can also be observed by others, which provides information nonverbally about the nature of the observed relationship. Across cultures, an increased level of emotional closeness between people corresponds to a larger region of permissible touch on the body (Suvilehto, 2015). An increased amount of touch has impacts within movement-based communities, as touch promotes trust and cooperation between individuals. For instance, professional basketball teams have been studied to examine the amount of touch between players and how touch contributes to team performance. Studied teams had developed specific touch languages including high fives, chest bumps, and fist bumps among other actions. Increased touch interactions between teammates was found to be correlated with improved team performance (Kraus et al., 2010). Sociologically speaking, touch communicates increased care within a relationship and therefore increases trust. The culturally-assigned meanings of touch are widely understood so that external observers may comprehend the nature of a relationship based on the type of touch contact that occurs between the individuals involved.

The potential for people to enact change through touch communication is massive. Tactile stimulation has the capacity to cause both physiological and behavioral effects through initiating changes in hormonal levels (Field, 2014). This type of sensory input triggers

neurological associations and memory, which could be either conscious or embedded.

Neurological pathways are accessed that cause the brain to send signals that increase or decrease production of certain hormones. This process directly affects mood and stress levels and aids in psychological processing. There are numerous psychophysical therapies that engage touch senses to process and alleviate a wide range of psychological states. The list includes acupressure, acupuncture, reflexology, chiropractic care, massage therapies, osteopathy, and various mind-body somatic practices. Massage therapies, for example, have been shown to have physical, mental, and emotional effects, and often these effects are interlinked. Massage therapies work to alleviate stress and depression through addressing tension in the body with different touch qualities and the release of endorphins. Additionally, massage boosts immune system function through release of natural killer cells (Ironson et al., 1996). Massage practitioners have noted numerous other specific effects that include both positive changes in the physical body and positive changes in the minds of clients.

Touch therapies have also been documented as causing change in tissue growth over time. Occupational therapist Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen has used her technique of Mind-Body Centering to engage in bone repatterning with young children. This involves repeated touch as treatment for broken bones and stimulation for corrective growth (Cohen, 1997). The sensation brought to the tissues in the specific region brings conscious awareness to the injury and initiates physical changes such as increased flow of fluid and changed cell chemistry. Very real physical changes can be seen through directed touch communication between active-minded therapy practitioners and clients.



Bodywork professionals have also noted countless experiences with clients for whom touch therapy initiates a psychological release. Through touch directed at areas of tension or body parts associated with trauma of any kind, people are able to confront, work through, and sometimes resolve psychological holdings. Touch therapists can control the caring quality of touch delivered, which can be understood by the client and work to establish the trust required for psychological issues to be addressed (Campbell, 1989). The thorough and caring modes of touch in therapy settings often satisfy a need for physical contact that goes unfulfilled for adults in daily life, thereby validating the individual and resulting in instinctual bonding similar to that which occurs through touch in early development. As trust is established through touch, a setting is created in the interpersonal relationship of therapist/client where psychological unpacking can successfully occur for the client either internally or externally. Because the body houses personal history, touch therapies are effective at addressing different psychological conditions through engaging elements of the mind-body connection.

### **Dance and Creative Movement Improvisation**

Spoken communication is largely improvisational; people utilize their learned language vocabulary to convey a message or sentiment, or to otherwise converse in the moment. A person can thoroughly plan verbal communication as in the cases of written speeches or previously thought out statements. However, when speaking in conversational communication settings, the verbal language someone uses can be classified as lingual improvisation. Verbal communication has improvisational physical components as well. Each culture has a physical vocabulary that is paired with spoken language including gesture, facial expression, and other bodily actions.

Movement paired with language is one element of an individual's embodied physical language, however other aspects of a person's physical history contribute greatly to their unique movement vocabulary. Similar to conversational speaking, when someone improvises exclusively with movement, they use their embodied movement vocabulary and capabilities without planning the sequence or choreographing. Like sentences in conversation, a person's movements string together and flow naturally outward for observers to perceive.

An individual's unique physical vocabulary depends on their life experiences, physical habits, specific movement practices, and other personal history. For trained dancers, this movement vocabulary includes stylized movements from their studied dance forms as well as other movement capabilities that their dance experience has afforded them. All people, whether trained in dance or not, utilize their unique movement vocabulary when asked to improvise with creative movement. Unlike a traditional dance class, where students are asked to imitate and learn the specific movements taught by the instructor, a movement improvisation class requires the students to generate their own personal movement. Although corporeal knowledge is gained about others through a traditional dance class format, an individual's embodied personal history is engaged differently in an improvisation setting. The specifics of the participants' movements are sourced exclusively from their bodies and minds, and therefore are a direct communication of themselves. As a result, through the completion of creative movement improvisation tasks and actions, information about the personal history and the personality or character of a person can be revealed. The teacher, fellow students, or other observers can gain a distinct sense of who the individual is through reception of this type of communication.

Movement improvisation workshops have a history of development throughout the twentieth century into the present. As with modern and other postmodern dance forms, numerous individuals have contributed to improvisational movement practice and teaching over this time. Referenced here are Anna Halprin, who used dance improvisation as a tool for personal discovery and community building; Steve Paxton, the founder of the specific movement form of Contact Improvisation; and Alito Alessi, who modified Paxton's Contact workshop form to be inclusive of people from all backgrounds and physical and mental abilities.

Dance experiences can develop awareness of one's body within the context of the physical environment. Movement improvisation accomplishes this in a multifaceted way through building awareness of "how you feel your body moving and/or how you can interrelate feeling yourself with the movement of others and /or can feel yourself with others in the physical environment," (Halprin, 2015, p. 47). Completing improvisation tasks requires moving in new and different ways, as well as noticing how one's body interacts with its surroundings, including the other people sharing the space. For Alessi, movement improvisation can be broken down into four elements: personal sensation, relationship to others, time and speed, and the surrounding environment (Alessi, 2014). Simultaneous engagement with all four elements comprises the practice of improvisation; spending time attempting and learning to do so constitutes the training involved. Improvisation has a skillset that can be learned. Unlike the practice of specific stylized movements in traditional dance techniques, improvisation involves learning ways to let go of judgement, think creatively, and move in response to the environment in ways that feel natural.

Movement improvisation workshops and similar experiences are often mentally and physically immersive, where immersion is defined as “the cognitive state in which individuals perceive a new [subjective reality] thanks to a shift in their perceptual associations,” (Trentini, 2015, p. S413). Immersive art experiences can cause individuals to become more aware of their perceptual processes and their adaptability because new and unusual settings require active sensory perception that breaks habitual modes of being. In this way, a creative improvisational movement experience is a useful tool for personal learning and broadening of one’s perceptions of other people and the physical environment. When individual learning occurs through the facilitation of a group immersive environment, exchange of corporeal knowledge occurs within the group. A collective learning happens as a sense of community emerges and vice versa.

Movement improvisation workshops have been used in a variety of settings. Group practice of creative movement improvisation can either purposefully or indirectly work to build community. Alito Alessi created and continues to teach a workshop format called DanceAbility, which he defines as “the study of movement improvisation for all people, in any combination of people, the full spectrum of humanity” (Alessi, 2014). He invites individuals of all backgrounds, regardless of age, race, socioeconomic status, and mental and physical ability, to participate in improvisational movement. Alessi’s goal is to eliminate divisions that separate humans from each other; he notes that isolation is the challenge, not disability/ability. He states: “Any problem can be solved in any community of people as long as you have a process of communication happening,” (Haapalinna, 2009). In this format, dance serves as the method for learning communication and as a medium for breaking down societal divisions by uniting a group of people through attention to each other.

An example of a setting that fosters improvisational movement in a unique way is what is referred to as a “jam.” This format stemmed from Paxton’s technique of Contact Improvisation and involves a group of dancers gathering in a designated space for a designated amount of time to improvise together. The form of Contact Improvisation is traditionally a duetting form, whereas jams are open-ended environments where solo movement can be explored in addition to the duets, trios, and larger groups that spontaneously emerge. This open format is largely universal and has been practiced in educational settings and recreationally in many different countries and cultures. Community is formed very quickly by people participating in a jam. Each person operates as an individual and has freedom to choose when, where, and how they dance or move. However, a participant also gives attention to the collective group of movers occupying the room. The movers constantly influence each other and trade movement ideas. Partnering and group movement often arise from cooperation, and a general overall quality establishes itself and unifies the dancers. Very quickly, people develop feelings of trust and belonging within the group regardless of their previous relationships to each other or lack thereof. Additionally, improvisation jams are traditionally nonverbal; all of the communication between the movers is sent and received somatically without words. In a matter of hours, closeness between pairs of individuals and a strong group closeness can arise through practicing improvisational movement in a jam.

Improvisation is often taught in educational institutions as it is an often accessible dance form; anyone is capable of generating creative movement relative to their body and ability (Alessi, 2014). For students of any age, with the exception of dancers with previous improvisation experience, an improvisation course actively breaks classroom and education

norms to which they are accustomed. Classroom learning is traditionally language-based, so students are typically not used to engaging with their bodies, their emotional and kinesthetic responses, and the information that can be gained through creative movement. Therefore, the assignments, tasks, and activities in a movement improvisation class often leave students confused early on (Aldrich, 2010). Over time, students gain comfort with what will be asked of them and confidence in their abilities to complete the tasks. They are able to figure out and understand what can be gained from movement experiences. College students in such courses have noted the ability to process their mood, understand their current energy, and change their mindset and physical feelings through dancing (Baldasare, 2010). Community is built easily in these types of classes as a result of increased touch between classmates and attention to peers' actions. Trust is fostered by many of the activities lead by the instructor, which furthers the closeness of the interpersonal relationships already felt due to the corporeal knowledge gained through engaging in the class content with the other students. Additionally, students new to dance and improvisation often feel unsure and vulnerable as they complete the course activities. Students become close through the shared experience of taking risks through physical expression; class groups collectively realize that their peers are not passing judgements as they are feeling the same vulnerability, and the group becomes a supportive community.

Improvisation workshops have the capacity to foster substantial personal investigation and group closeness in therapeutic settings, open-invitation formats, and educational institutions. Guided group practice of improvisational forms leads to development of a community. Even one workshop meeting has the potential to build interpersonal relationships and group trust, as well as facilitate individual insight and learning.

## Contact Improvisation

Contact Improvisation is an example of a dance practice that has the potential to facilitate physical nonverbal communication. Contact improvisation is a movement framework originally developed as a duet form and is a dance form where touch is essential. The form harnesses natural gravitational forces to involve two bodies in a movement duet. Contact Improvisation was developed in the early 1970s by Paxton and his collaborators. Although this type of improvisation has a distinct skill vocabulary and is identified as a unique style by many, Paxton clarifies that it was sourced from wrestling, jitterbug, Aikido, gymnastics, and dance and that nothing new was invented; the creators merely “specified a way of activity that is exclusive of the *aims* of other duet forms,” (Paxton, 1975, p. 40). The form is nonverbal and relies primarily on touch and the administering and receiving of touch as speaking and listening; Paxton describes, “...it is through touching that the information about each other’s movement is transmitted,” (1975, p. 40). All permutations of active/passive and demanding/responding roles arise as partnerships explore improvisationally together. Partners move in and out of these social roles with fluidity to achieve cooperation facilitated through the touch communication that brings attention to the whole body, the internal self, the relationship with the floor, with gravity, and with the partner.

Contact Improvisation facilitates an exploration of touch in ways that are nonthreatening, nonsexual, and without a specific functional action goal. This kind of touch does not often happen in adulthood (Aiken in Bales and Netti-Fiol, 2008). Nancy Stark Smith, another of the form’s founders, describes the role of touch in the form: “In our cultures, touch was related to either intimacy, like social intimacy, or violence, like sexuality or violence. And to have a

language, that was a physical language that was touch based that was neither of those extremes necessarily. It wasn't a social form and it wasn't about fighting. It was about talking to each other about different things. That was pretty new" (The poetics of touch, 2013). The specific framing of the use of touch allows for expansive play-like exploration and discovery because it is conversational and not limited by socially imposed hesitations.

A cornerstone of Contact Improvisation is the idea that the body has inherent movement. Even when the body is still, there is shift and motion. Teachers of Contact help students access this idea through practice of "the small dance," which involves standing quietly with eyes closed. This act facilitates learning to pay close attention to the muscular work required for the anatomy to hold a neutral position and allows presumed stillness to change into awareness of the constant motion throughout the body (Henderson, 2010). Internally, motion occurs constantly as a part of human biological function; our skeletal, neural, and muscular systems are constantly working to support even the simplest daily action.

Contact Improvisation has been used as a form of physical therapy. Beginning in 1986, Paxton worked in conjunction with clinical psychologist and performance researcher Anne Kilcoyne to teach Contact Improvisation workshops to a combination of sighted and visually impaired participants. The form lends itself well to working with sight impaired individuals as sighted people are often instructed to close their eyes when learning Contact to focus on the touch and kinesthetic senses. As previously discussed, visually impaired people are a population in which the individuals have unique physical histories as a result of the physical activities that have been available and unavailable throughout their lifetimes. Their senses function differently compared to sighted people, often in heightened ways, and therefore visually impaired



individuals have different physical modes of perceiving information. As a result of the specific experience that their sensory abilities provide, visually impaired people often have sedentary patterns, limited movement ranges and fears regarding movement (Paxton et al., 1993). This pattern can result in a state of muscular tension including a resistance to contact, as well as psychological effects such as an inward drawn personality. Paxton and Kilcoyne address the unique histories of the sight impaired participants through facilitating relaxation of the muscles in order to be able to relearn alertness and readiness of action.

Sight is hugely important for most physical communication: cues from sight provide information on how one sits, stands, holds the head and hands, and locomotes (runs or walks). Therefore, those without sight have had different physical life experiences which may increase their perceived difference compared to sighted individuals. Sight and touch sensation are the two senses by which humans perceive information that the body communicates. Contact Improvisation engages both of these senses actively, but is also successful when sighted participants practice without vision. Instructors often ask participants to close their eyes and refer to “listening” with the body and the sense of touch. Through Contact workshops, “cultural barriers which often constrain or even impede healthy human communication disappear as touch, movement, blindness, sight and equality within the work combine to provide a radically different climate for one person to meet another,” (Paxton et al., 1993, p. 7). Paxton and Kilcoyne’s use of Contact Improvisation in this setting has the goal of opening healthy communication channels through breaking social norms and providing a new physical communication experience. Contact was a functional therapeutic tool in their work as it facilitated increasing physical

movement ranges for unsighted participants and unified sighted and unsighted participants through the form's primary reliance on touch.

### **Research Summary**

Through my research, I have determined that every person has a unique physicality as a result of the functionings of the connections between the mind and body. Our physical experiences influence our personalities, and our emotional experiences influence our physical habits, movements, and expression. Nonverbal forms of communication are constantly engaged in daily life and can accurately convey elements of a person's character and personal history. Dance movement offers a heightened degree of communication of corporeal information. Improvisational movement by individuals in group settings results in the increased transfer of corporeal knowledge. In improvisational dance settings, people act as both movers and observers, often simultaneously, which leads to increased closeness of interpersonal relationships and builds trust and community among the group.

## **Movement Research as Process**

My methodology can be referred to as movement or embodied research. Physical cultural norms impose numerous limits on bodily movements (Ekman, 1977). Dance breaks many of the societal rules about movement and therefore serves as a useful research tool. In educational or therapeutic settings where creative movement is encouraged, facilitated, and taught, different pathways in the brain can be accessed leading to new thought and discovery. It is through this type of immersive, disorienting experience that novel understanding of typical habits, routines, and orientations can be achieved (Albright, 2011). Embodied research has been defined as “...a blend of phenomenology, anthropology (with its long tradition of field studies and the participant/observer dynamic), ethnography, and cultural studies” (Albright, 2011, p. 14). The process of drawing conclusions from this type of investigation does not always feel concrete to my scientifically-trained brain. This type of work lacks clean-cut parameters and variables. Instead, attention must be given to the ambiguity that can arise from seeking to conceptualize physical sensations and experiences (Albright, 2011). Through the process of engaging movement as a research tool, greater understanding and knowledge can be acquired about the body, the mind, and the often ambiguous connections between them.

My experiences and observations in the Dance 107 Experimental Workshop course, and my independent process of workshop design and implementation both fall into the category of movement/embodied research. This work over the academic year has consisted of investigation and learning through movement experiences. The students involved were not subjects of study, but instead were full participants in the artistic research process. Their experiences, thoughts, observations, and movements, along with mine, are the work; no definitive product is necessary.

### **Experience in Dance 107 - Experimental Workshop: Introduction to Improvisation**

During the Fall 2015 semester, I served as a teaching assistant in *Dance 107 - Experimental Workshop: Introduction to Improvisation*, a course with Adjunct Professor Kellie Lynch. I attended and was active in every class meeting, which provided the opportunity to observe the exercises and the students from a dual perspective. Through participating in the solo, partner, and group movement activities, I was able to physically embody the tasks the students were being asked to attempt and be a member of their dynamic class community. My internal perspective as a mover informed my external understanding of the class's movement explorations as an observer. To supplement my direct observations and experiences, I interviewed nine of the students in the class near the end of the semester, in December of 2015. These thirty-minute casual interviews provided me with the opportunity to ask questions pointed specifically towards my area of study and hear others verbalize elements of their experiences (See Appendix III for Dance 107 Student Recorded Interview Questions).

As a result of the time spent in the course, I gained a strong sense of some aspects of each student's character, including the students with whom I never had a verbal conversation. Over time, I actively observed the physicality of each of the twenty-five students, both in terms of movement and their physical daily participation. It was visible when a student was uncomfortable in a movement task as they appeared physically guarded and withholding. Comfort was also very clear in a body; when students were comfortable, their movement was distinctly free and unrestricted. All of the students I interviewed noted increased personal confidence in generating improvisational movement over the course of the semesters and had observed the same in their classmates. This is logical as the course was designed to encourage

students to expand their comfort with movement generally and movement improvisation specifically. The increase in individuals' physical confidence facilitated greater possibilities for the group when they worked collectively in collaborative exercises and whole group compositional scores.

Each student entered the course and the studio each day with their personal physical history. Some were athletes, some had previous dance experience, and all live a life in a specific physical body. Because of this, each student has unique movement capacities and patterns. This was visible in both the pedestrian movement that we utilized at the beginning of the course, and in the creative streaming of movement that we developed through the semester. Each body moves differently and in doing so, reflects aspects of the personality and history of the human it contains. Through interviewing students, I determined that they often have awareness of aspects of their physical history that are expressed in their creative movement improvisations. One student consciously used poses and movements from their years of yoga practice when they were at a loss for ideas. They also noted that they felt influenced by their countless experiences playing soccer throughout their life, but the experience of that history was less specific and intentional. Another student attributed their comfort and ease in the contact and trust exercises to their experiences of roughhousing with their older brother. They were able to recognize that they knew what it was like to be dropped, to fall, and to be tackled as well as the fact that their body could withstand the force of those actions. As a result, they did not have the same fears and hesitations as others in the class.

The group work (duet, trio, quartet and whole group forms) required engagement with and attention to the physicality of a partner or a group of peers. Over time, the group became

comfortable working with and watching each other. The movement of the bodies with whom we shared the studio space was observed both consciously and unconsciously resulting in a distinct sense of knowing each other. As one student pointed out, corporeal knowing can be difficult to verbalize, “You can’t necessarily describe it...you kind of just have this feeling inside that you know them in some kind of way.” Another student observed, “When I think of [a certain] person, I think of certain movements or the way they move. It’s fascinating how there’s so many people, but they all have different characters.” In this specific setting, associations with individuals were movement-based rather than fact based; we know our classmates’ movement vocabularies and styles but not necessarily details of about their lives.

I purposely interviewed several students with whom I had not previously had conversations outside of the small verbal interactions appropriate in the setting of the course. Through the half hour-long one-on-one conversations, my impressions of the students’ personalities based on their unique style of movement were confirmed through traditional verbal communication. I became aware of the honesty of the physical body; the impressions I had about each student based on my observations of their movement and physicality were accurate and true. The corporeal knowledge that I acquired through the shared movement experience over time gave me real information about the characters housed in the moving bodies.

Each student also entered the course with a certain relationship to every other student and to Lynch and myself. Although some students had friends in the class, in many cases, they did not have a previous relationship with the other individuals. Through time, the class became a community. In my experience, a college course generally cultivates a community between the students. In this dance course in particular, the nature of the daily class work involved physically

moving with the other students. The content of the course differs from a traditional dance technique class where the goal is to gain a vocabulary of movement through absorbing, emulating, and copying the style being taught. In an improvisation class, the goal is to practice skills and specific techniques that aid in diversifying one's individual improvisational movement and in broadening the options possible in a group improvisational score or jam situation. A traditional modern technique course, for example, has students all facing one direction with their attention on the instructor in order to learn specific movements. Conversely, improvisation courses focus on the individual as a member of the larger group and utilizes exercises that engage students with each other visually and physically. Often trust is required, especially in exercises that required touch contact between two or more people. This type of engagement of the physical bodies in movement practice together in Dance 107 noticeably created unique bonds between with the group. Several students expressed the closeness they felt to the other members of the class; one description was, "When I see people from our class, it's different [from someone from a sociology or history class] . Like 'Oh team member!' " The corporeal knowing-based connections built within this class translated to closeness in other social settings.

The content of this course did not directly deal with movement therapies, however one student in particular described the experience as extremely therapeutic and impactful on their stress levels during the semester. At first, physical contact and partnerwork made them very nervous; they self-described as someone who likes their personal space. During a particularly stressful period in the semester, they described, "The way I perceived contact became kind of different, I don't know how it changed but it somehow felt like support to me... I was feeling lonely and all that, and it was nice being touched by other people." For them, there was a

distinct shift from difficulty and discomfort with contact to relishing in the the therapeutic, supportive nature of the touch involved.

I asked the nine students I interviewed about what they learned that they felt they would carry forward. Several students noted that this course will help them in other areas of life that can be viewed as improvisational, such as public speaking, teaching, and working with people in general. Several students said they feel more capable of trusting others. One student described the ways this has manifested in their life:

“I feel more comfortable putting trust in other people and I’m also more willing to be there for other people, whether it’s physical or not... I don’t know if this was directly derived from my dance class experience... but I find myself reaching out to friends, who are having problems, more than I used to.”

Students also indicated increased ability to read physicality in situations and to understand what is involved in their own physicality. A student described that they were conscious of how their movement in the class setting was dependent on her emotional state and other elements:

“My body moved different ways on different days... That could be based on my mood, it could be based on a variety of external factors, but those external factors I think affect my movement. So if I’m having a good day or things are going well in my life, I think that translates into me being more willing to take risks or move more vigorously or something. Or if I’m having a bad day or things aren’t as great, I think I’m more likely to be reserved.”

Movement and external factors are linked, but one also has agency in one’s physicality. In my role as an experienced improviser participating in the course, I was conscious of my ability to exude confidence and clarity with my body through my physical actions in the course content.

My observations and experiences in *Dance 107 - Experimental Workshop: Introduction to Improvisation* furthered my understanding of what we can communicate and perceive



physically and how those elements combined with time spent in a movement-focused course can facilitate personal and communal growth.

## **Workshop Design**

During the Spring 2016 semester, I designed and led a series of seven movement improvisation workshops. The first six workshops were taught to a core group of seven participants, who had varying levels of previous dance and improvisation training ranging from many years of study to none. The final workshop was open to the campus and served to share discoveries from the research done by myself and the core group. I collected verbal responses from the participants through discussion during and after each workshop, and through having them respond in writing in the days following each workshop. I have included elements of their experiences of the process throughout my descriptions of the workshop series and open workshop. Additionally, I conducted filmed interviews with the seven core participants which are included in a documentary entitled “Moving from Self to Community: A Movement Improvisation Workshop Series” (see Appendix IV for Workshop Series Participant Filmed Interview Questions, see Appendix V for Workshop Documentary Film Information).

The development and design of my workshop series was sourced from both my direct experience, dance-related and not, and my research. I have studied classical and contemporary dance forms for eighteen years, including eleven years of improvisation in various forms. Although I have a limited amount of teaching experience, the general structure of a movement class is ingrained in me as a result of my dance training history. In planning my workshops, I directly sourced certain activities and exercises from my teachers (see Appendix I). I directly

reference individuals when I can in my workshop design notes (Appendix II). In addition to my years of dance training, activities draw from observations and experiences from my daily life, and from my social experiences in different dance education, rehearsal, and performance settings. My academic research has both given me ideas and informed the purpose and intention of certain activities.

There is a general traditional format followed by teachers of movement improvisation workshops. As outlined by Paxton and Kilcoyne, a Contact Improvisation class or workshop usually consists of four elements: the warm up, building blocks, Contact Improvisation, and closure (1993). The warm up consists of slow, individual movement designed to stretch, lengthen, and energize the body in order to protect it against “the excesses of competition, over-enthusiasm, and under-use” (Paxton et al., 1993, p. 30). The warm up also functions to focus the mind on the physical sensations and activity. The building block exercises involve practicing improvisational skills that are useful in scores and open improvisational settings. In Paxton’s Contact classes, these involve pairs of people practicing weight-giving, weight-bearing, falling, climbing, lifting, and rolling. This section of a class is “a controlled investigation of trust, reliability, balance...” (Paxton et al., 1993, p. 31). The body of a Contact Improvisation class is open improvisation where the building blocks are used within partnerships as tools to discover the movement possibilities that exist in their dances. In workshops that are not exclusively Contact, this body of the class consists of movement tasks and exercises designed to engage the participants and further their learning and practice. The closure of a workshop allows for processing of the experience and for re-entry into daily life. The work in a movement workshop differs greatly from cultural routines. Paxton et al. notes “...the mixture of

camaraderie, trust, touch, empathy, nurturing, fitness and health that marks a contact improvisation workshop is not easily found in the everyday lives of most people,” (1993, p. 33). Verbal discussion at the end of a class permits emotions of all varieties to be felt and shared. Throughout the workshop form, allowing time for participants to process the events is essential for integration of the concepts and physical experiences.

Teachers of improvisation, including Lynch in Dance 107 - Experimental Workshop, generally follow this format, although often without the element of contact. Lynch used warm ups and building block exercises to engage the students in practicing improvisational techniques individually, or in duets or small groups. She was clear in identifying the first exercise or activity done in the class as the students' warm up. Over time, it appeared that the students increased their understanding of what that meant for their bodies and for the rest of their experience in that class period. Instead of a long Contact Improvisation session, Lynch would use the second half of the time to have the class practice scores and other large-group improvisation forms that necessitated the continuing use of their improvisational and creative movement skills but also engaged compositional thought. She often referred to “composing a dance in the moment” as one of the goals of the group activity.

In the warm ups, building block, and improvisational exercises, Lynch was excellent at gauging the amount of time needed doing a certain activity to allow for the students to cope with their discomfort, problem solve for their unique body, and understand and fulfill the task. I was able to understand the importance of sufficient time spent both as a participant in the activities and during the two class periods I planned out and taught. Students, especially those who are

new to dance, require time to move beyond physical and mental barriers and accomplish what is asked of them. Understanding the use of time was essential in planning my workshops.

Lynch often did not have enough time to do a full closing, but she did check in with the group at different moments in the class to gather thoughts and questions. In the class periods I led, I saved enough time at the end of the class to facilitate one of these types of conversations. One student noted in their interview that he appreciated this element of my teaching as it allowed them to process what had just happened in the classroom. Since time was not the same obstacle in my two hour workshop sessions, I was able to incorporate a reflective discussion as a closing element. Although the work and much of the learning is corporeal, I find it important to verbalize one's experience in order to understand and remember.

Alessi, in his DanceAbility workshops, always begins in a circle and in silence "to assure that we're beginning nonverbally together" (Alessi, 2014). For him, this is a way to unify his diverse participants and immediately establish a group unit. Elements of ritual are important especially in a context where the participants are new to the work as it provides a level of comfort through predictable aspects of the experience and affords the ability to recognize elements of the workshops as they occur. Following the same general format for each workshop provided a familiar framework for the participants and myself, and maximized learning while facilitating comfort and community growth.

The overall goal of the design of the workshops was to break physical habits, routines, and cultural limits that the participants have acquired through their physical history. Through the deconstruction of these barriers, new thought is provoked, and new information can be discovered and communicated. The process involved cultivating a new environment with a

newly formed group of people in order to provide a unique movement experience and examine community development through improvisation. In this way, my workshops used movement tasks as a form of embodied research to access discovery and new knowledge on individual, interpersonal, and communal levels.

### **Reflections on Leading**

Through designing and teaching improvisation workshops this semester, I learned what is required of a leader in such settings. In many ways, improvisation is a key element to leading within the framework of a designed class plan. The amount of time each exercise needs to develop and be successful is often unpredictable. In order to have an activity be useful and interesting for the group, I found myself tweaking elements and timing of tasks in the moment. At times, I had to significantly add or subtract activities from a plan in order to fit the group's needs. Each week, I was especially struck by how improvisational my use of language was in leading. Even for my most well thought out exercises, I found myself improvising phrasing and guiding words to help the participants understand and complete the tasks. Additionally, I was aware of the confidence I could consciously embody as I explained, demonstrated, and moved along with the participants. I found that exuding sureness in my physicality was necessary to normalize the tasks and ease the nerves and discomfort of my participants. I noticed this especially in demonstrating activities involving touch. There is a certain firmness of touch that communicates confidence, care, and safety without being aggressive or overly manipulating. The use of my physicality to direct and lead the group was very improvisational at times, but also controlled and purposeful to model the type of participation I desired from the group.

Due to the unknown aspects involved in the language and physicality of teaching improvisation, I was always very nervous before each workshop. I felt anxiety about what I had planned and how it would be received. However, once the group gathered in the studio and we began, I would feel immediately at ease. Over time, the anticipatory anxiety reduced but did not go away. The imagined presence of the group as I planned gave me stress, but actually being with the small community in the space made me excited to try things and explore. The presence of the familiar group of people positively influenced my emotional state through their willingness and dedication. Their interest in the work and support of me and my ideas was made clear through their physical participation and verbal responses.

## **Workshop Series Development and Implementation**

### **Workshop 1: Introductions**

The first workshop was designed to introduce the participants to each other, to movement improvisation, and to the specific types of improvisation tasks I would be asking them to complete throughout the series. Our first meeting together set the tone and the expectations for the rest of the meetings. I was very conscious that there were three participants new to dance who had never been a part of a movement improvisation workshop before. Additionally, not everyone in the group knew each other. Therefore, I began with a name game involving movement. From there, the workshop consisted entirely of individual movement; there were no activities that involved partners or groups. Paul MacMullin, one of the new dancers, noted that he was not expecting individualistic tasks because I had framed the project as involving physical communication, but he realized that “when people are in a room together, communication

happens no matter what.” This workshop had the goal of engaging with the unique movement of the self, however the act of individual movement in a group setting had already began the transfer of corporeal knowledge. The participants sharing the space were observing the other bodies and therefore each individual was both sharing parts of themselves through moving and perceiving information from others. Communication had already begun.

Purposefully, the first exercise I led the group through was an extended eyes closed improvisation. I wanted to introduce the baseline act of streaming movement and get everyone dancing and thinking creatively while eliminating the fear of judgement. I wanted to give plenty



of time for self judgements to begin to subside and for a feeling of immersion to develop, so I kept them in this first dance for twenty minutes. The new dancers expressed that working for this time with their eyes closed allowed them to focus on their movements and sensations without worry about embarrassment. All the participants appreciated beginning with the deep inner focus that results from not being able to watch others or watch themselves move.

With eyes open, we continued to investigate elements of our individual creative movement including finding our natural dancing speed. I asked the participants to notice their natural pace as we freely improvised movement. I then guided the group through slowing down from that pace notch by notch, then returning to their natural pace, followed by speeding up notch by notch, and then returning back to their natural pace. Finding our comfortable pace of moving was easily identifiable especially after moving away from it. It

was clear that even people new to dance have tendencies in their bodies immediately in dance movement. Through this self-focused work, several participants were able to identify elements of their physical history manifesting in different ways as they improvised. Others were able to take note of their personal patterns relatively quickly.

For me, teaching the first workshop involved rapid learning about how to run a workshop and figuring out how to begin to apply ideas from my academic research. After our first session, I was confident that group comfort would increase as we moved beyond the introductory level and that I would be able to explore the complex, at times ambiguous concepts, with the group as a result of their clear dedication and enthusiasm.

## **Workshop 2: Partnership**

The second workshop was composed of activities completed in pairs to engage in movement communication in interpersonal relationships. I was careful with any partnered activities throughout all the workshops that the participants got to complete both roles if there were distinct differences involved in the activities, such as leading and following. Working with partners seemed a logical next step in order to enable the participants more comfortable and familiar with other people in the group. After a brief warm up, the first exercise I led is referred to as “the fluid walk” and involved one partner with their eyes closed being guided by the other partner around the room. We began with walking and built to moving faster, some running, and quick shifts of direction to move the partner around the space. I intentionally did this exercise first as it did not involve streaming creative movement, but it did require immediate trust between partners and the use of touch communication to direct the eyes-closed partner. My partner for the leading exercise was Paul. I had the group return to their first partners for the last



activity, so we shared a dance at the end as well. Everything I did with Paul was very interesting as I have a distinct close friendship with him, but all of these activities were new to our previously established relationship. That being said, I was able to trust him absolutely and immediately found comfort in his leading.

The other partnered activities investigated following touch from a partner, negative space dancing, and being influenced and not being influenced by another person when moving with them. Sometimes I participated as a mover, and at other times fully observed the rest of the group. If I was observing, whoever I was paired with also got the chance to observe the moving done by the remaining six group members. This active observation helped to further eliminate embarrassment and continued to establish familiarity with the other group members and their specific movements and physicalities.

Each pairing over the course of the workshop was unique and seemed to have its own character. One of the most interesting partnerships I observed was Marina Stuart and Paul in the negative space exploration. Both are new to dance, but both are collegiate athletes and have strong bodies with specific movement trainings related to their sports. Their duet began slowly with small movements. As they spent more time in the task, they seemed to gain comfort with each other and were able to begin expanding their exploration. They started to move between high and low levels. They were intensely focused on each other, which remained as their movement vocabulary grew. Their duet was distinct especially compared to Ruy Zambrano and Emily Green, who both have dance training which influenced their combined movement quality. There is no right or wrong in these types of improvisations; the differences between the way the

different pairings explored the directions showed the unique movement relationships that arise between two people.

I also observed that participants were influenced by the individual personality perceived from their partner's movement. In the final open duet format, Kira Kirk, a new dancer, and Ruy were paired together. Kira was clearly influenced by the energy and athleticism of Ruy's movement, which led to a distinct playfulness in their partnership as a result of the combination of their personal tendencies. By contrast, Marina and Sénait



Judge-Yoakam, the latter a trained dancer, had a duet that was exploratory but more slow and contained. Generally, I was impressed by how the participants jumped easily into the partner work including the activities involving touch. All gave focused attention to the tasks and completed them beautifully, despite the fact that it was only our second meeting together.

### **Workshop 3: Group**

The third workshop centered on activities that required the whole group to work together with the purpose of forming greater group trust. The activities engaged group attention and cooperation. With these goals in mind, I introduced the concept of a score, or a set of guidelines that directs the action of individuals within a group. The first score I led was a variation of a Nina Martin score suggested to me by Associate Professor Heidi Henderson; the group walked around the space in any direction and everyone had the option to stop and stand still but they could not move again until two other people had stopped to stand next to them forming a line of three people shoulder to shoulder. Once a line of three established, it dissolved as all three

people began walking again. Since the score seemed simple, the group and I were pleasantly surprised by the way the it developed and how possibilities for creative choices were uncovered. All participants commented that they enjoyed the work we did with scores. Following a set of rules allows for the brain to focus on the task and the group, and begin to think about the compositional whole within the space. In some of the scores, I used Lynch's directive and asked the participants to think about composing a dance in the moment.

In the trust-centric activities, it was clearly observable who was trusting and comfortable, and who was not. We did circle trust falls, where the group stands around one person who has their eyes closed and moves them around the circle as they lean off their feet as in a traditional trust fall. Most



people began very rigid and held in their bodies, but, for the most part, everyone relaxed into the activity. After enough time, the participants understood and absorbed the sensations of the multiple hands catching their weight and could perceive that the group was holding and passing them safely. It was interesting to feel the weight of the individual bodies in the room, and in particular how weight is distributed differently on different people. The teamwork of the circle was very seamless while the communication remained nonverbal. Because group cooperation was required to keep a person from falling and hurting themselves, the teamwork happened without hesitation from anyone.

At the end of this workshop, Kira commented that she was very stressed at the beginning of the workshop about things unrelated to the workshop and as a result was not looking forward

to the session. She expressed that she had forgotten what it felt like to commit to the space and have a new experience. She wrote afterwards,

“I realized at the end of the class that I love that I can be creative in the space of our sessions. I never really thought about it but I have always been a very spontaneous and creative person but for a long time the school work and things that life requires does not allow me to be creative. I felt like I can do whatever weird and silly thing that I want in the space and it adds rather than detracts from the experience.”

Her response is indicative of the growth process of individual comfort which leads to the establishment of a positive group dynamic. For me and the participants, understanding what our work together involved and felt like was a gradual discovery and building of collective information.

#### **Workshop 4: Contact Improvisation**

The fourth workshop was devoted to introducing the form of Contact Improvisation. Four of the seven participants had some level of previous experience with Contact, but the other three did not beyond the trust fall weightbearing we had done in Workshop 2 and Workshop 3. I



have taken many Contact Improvisation classes from several different teachers, but this was my first time leading others in the form. In Contact especially, safety is key and there are proper techniques for giving your weight to a partner in a safe manner. I was careful to be attentive to teaching how to pour

weight towards and away from a partner gradually and kept giving reminders to be extra attentive to that task. Slow release of weight into a partner allows them time to feel how much

weight they need to support and how to adjust their physicality in response. Sharing of weight between partners is essential in Contact; at times, both partners are simultaneously supporting and being supported, and at other times one partner supports the other more fully. Properly executing the pouring weight facilitates physical communication about where each partner's body is and where the duet can move next.

The Contact Improvisation skills built throughout the workshop to culminate in an open Contact duet dance. I chose to have the group switch partners for different activities as opposed to building comfort with one partner. Doing so allowed all of us to experience different bodies with different weights and structures, and the varying ways people complete the tasks. One of the key elements of Contact Improvisation is that any two bodies can work together and explore the duetting form as a pair regardless of size, gender, experience, or other factors. Each pair's individual solutions for the tasks are valid and interesting.

In the final open duet exercise, I had everyone return to their first partner and invited the participants to use any of the skills we had practiced that day and move together. Emily described her experience as,

“The final duet improvisation felt so out-of-body and new. I felt like Marina and I kind of fell into a rhythm of having a conversation by leading or directing ours and the others movements. I found myself using different limbs and surfaces of the body to direct and sense movement and I thought that was really exciting because of its newness to my senses. The whole experience was very calming.”

Paul also commented that it was interesting to be both a leader and a follower simultaneously. The requirement of both roles in Contact leads to its conversational nature. The participants commented on type of touch used in Contact that people do not use or receive in daily life; it has

a sensuality and intimacy without being sexual and therefore, is comforting and contributes to a closeness between partners. S  nait did not notice that I had put quiet music on to accompany the movement in the room, which is indicative of the immersive nature of Contact duets and the intense focus required.

At the end of this workshop, I guided the group through a bodywork exercise designed to address Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective of body as object. One partner explored lifting and mobilizing a relaxed partner's head, legs, and arms with the purpose of feeling the weight and motion capabilities of each. We found that feeling the tensions that exist in a partner's body as you gently manipulate their joints was easy. We noted that exploring the body primarily as a physical object is rare in daily life or movement experiences. This exercise was the first task I led that directly engaged with the philosophy and psychology elements of my research; it was exciting and encouraging when the group felt it was a positive learning experience.

### **Workshop 5: Memory**

At this point in the series, we had developed a strong familiarity with the workshop format and each other, so I felt comfortable entering the more personal realm of memory and its relationship to the body in movement. I began by having the participants draw a visual representation of a map of their life. With a second color, they added highlights and lowlights. Eventually, I had them choose a place on the drawing that evoked a specific memory. I was careful not to use qualifying terms for the emotional content of the memory. I then had the group begin with their eyes closed and lying on their backs. I guided them through an

improvisation exploring the memory they chose and where they feel that memory embodied physically. I closed the workshop with the reverse exercise; the participants began moving from one specific body part while thinking about tracing that specific body part's physical history and recalling any memories associated with it. The activities dealing with memory and body-memory connection were hard to read as the leader. The participants were clearly very focused and actively working to complete the task but I could not gauge the quality of their experiences from observing.

Both of these tasks explored physical manifestation of memory, including potentially addressing Reich's ideas of rigidity within the body as a result of emotional holding. Spencer Lutvak noted that it was easier to generate movement when engaging with a memory: "It was



also helpful for me to not be judging myself and my movements, but to rather focus on the memory and see what my body wanted to do." In the first exercise, S  nait had an intense experience as she chose a point on her map that represented an emotionally heavy memory. She expressed that it was very difficult to

spend a length of time revisiting this memory, but that physically connecting emotions with body allowed her to eventually feel some comfort in the discomfort.

A notable moment of this workshop for me was in an exercise adapted from Ishmael Houston-Jones, a New York-based master improviser, choreographer, and teacher, where one person guided their partner in an eyes closed backward walk and listened to them describe a person in detail. The eyes closed partners described their chosen person physically and in terms

of character traits while walking for ten minutes. I then asked for those guiding to bring their partner to stillness and step away from them. Next, I gave the eyes closed partners who had just described a person the simple directive to “begin to move,” while the guiding partners watched. This was the first time I had the participants dance openly for five minutes without any further instruction or guiding language from me. No one hesitated; they knew to begin exploring with movement as a means to reflect on the immersive experience. Seeing the ease and comfort the new dancers had as they dove directly into improvising was especially exciting.

The work we did dealing with memory was a new level of intensity and personal research for this group in our workshop setting. As I led the exercises, I realized that something lighter was required to break up the texture of the experience. To do so, I had the group do a score I learned from Houston-Jones involving setting up in two vertical lines facing each other. The movers walked towards the person across from them and did one action when they met in the middle, then retreated back to the starting lines, and repeated walking towards and doing a different action. This score was very effective at providing the necessary release as the act of completing this score is funny. The physical feeling of walking toward someone, having one simultaneous instinctual action, then walking away, resetting, and doing it again feels ridiculous. The score was very playful while engaging instinctual instant physical responses to another person’s physical action.

This score addressed several elements of my research as it facilitated a type of isolated physical interaction that feels both conversational, but also collective. The score dictates for the shape created by the actions of the two individuals to be held in stillness at least briefly, which gave the movers time to sense the meaning and/or emotional content contained in the action



taken and shape created. Pedestrian gestural movement and more abstract dance action were both used within the interactions, so sometimes the meaning was easily identifiable and sometimes it was more abstract and perhaps not easily verbalized. The pausing of interaction allows for a moment of corporeal knowledge communication between the partners to be isolated and understood. Additionally, this score employed Bernstein's model of a desired future. Both the participants and I noted that as we walked toward our partner, our instinct was to plan our action. Sometimes the action is completed as planned, but most often it changes in response to the partner's movement and energy. In the brief time of walking forward, I found myself imagining the physicality of my action and feeling my muscles prepared to complete it. The sensation of quickly and instinctively changing that imagined action in response was fascinating in terms of experiencing the speed



of my own mind-body connection. I chose to have pairs step out during this score to observe and watch the whole image of the partnerships moving in and out. The varied timings of the pairs walking towards each other is compositionally very interesting as different pairs reveal or cover others. Ruy noted that there were often waves of energy that would ripple through the pairs; if one couple ran at each other instead of walked, that energy would influence the actions of other duos. I also shuffled the partnerships with each other periodically, in order to keep the interactions fresh.

At this point in the workshop series, I noticed how we were able dig into the ambiguous, yet intriguing elements of my academic research through embodiment and active attention on the personal history of the individuals. The depth and amount of research accomplished in this workshop was a result of the work in the previous four sessions and the way the progression had set up a format for working as individuals and together. A community closeness had developed that contributed to sense of safety within the space.

### **Workshop 6: Co-Research**

For the last workshop, each of the seven core participants brought an idea for a movement exercise to try with the group. I met briefly with each person to discuss their idea and decide how it would be led between the two of us; some felt comfortable leading the group, others asked that I lead their activity. As a group, we completed each person's exercise in an order I curated based on the content and movement involved. I felt it was important to provide the participants an opportunity to explore an interest they had within my area of study and to give value and ownership to their role as researchers through embodiment and movement.

The ideas brought into the space by the participants were fascinating, varied, and successful. In the filmed interviews, most of the participants identified one of their peer's activities as among their most memorable or influential from any of the workshops. For those who chose to step into the teaching role, I was interested to see the way they negotiated the role that I have been investigating and gradually gaining comfort in. Sénait was admittedly nervous as she led a group flocking follow-the-leader score as the warm up, but successfully found

language to guide the group. Each person's idea either wonderfully built on the work we had done so far, or brought a new idea related to my research that I had not been able to explore yet.

I was especially interested in Paul's investigation of embodied emotion through touch. We designed an exercise where one partner stood with their eyes closed and chose an emotion to actively embody in stillness. The other person kept their eyes open and investigated their partner's physicality through touch with different surfaces. Eventually, I directed the embodying partner to begin to move allowing the exploration to continue within a dynamic duet. There was a surprising level of specificity of emotion communicated. In some ways, we confirmed findings in the study by Hertenstein et al. where emotions were successfully conveyed through full-bodied touch. Amongst all the pairs, the detail of the embodied emotions was conveyed beyond broad identifiers such as "happiness" or "fear." I guessed that Paul was embodying positivity and strength; it turned out he was specifically thinking of optimism and the strength that goes with it. As a challenge, I chose to embody anxiety as I knew that two things that would typically relieve my anxiety are my friendship with Paul and moving in contact with someone else. I discovered that I had to choose a specific type of anxiety in order to feel the sensations of the emotion physically. I wanted the challenge of continuing to hold onto the feelings of anxiety despite the instinctual relief the activity brought. Interestingly, Paul could observe my discomfort before he began contacting me and once moving in contact he could easily pick up on the rigidity and resistance of my body. Sénait noted that the touch communication in this exercise was much more clear than the communication accomplished in Emily's exercise, which we had done immediately previously. Emily had each person improvise attempting to embody three words that someone else wrote down while others observed and attempted to guess what

words the movers had been given. The observers were able to pick out some of the content of what the movers were improvising on, but there was much more ambiguity in observing as opposed to touching.

Marina's idea, dubbed "Marina's Freeze Score," was incredibly exciting to watch. It involved five dancers in the space moving in any way together. The two dancers on the periphery could call "freeze" at any moment to pause the group and go in a replace one dancer in the shape. There was clear comfort and trust within the group. They made innovative choices in their individual movement and were bold in who they chose to replace in the pauses. The



rhythm of experimentation within the structure was dynamic yet unifying. The group moving together in the open movement score was very satisfying. They had developed a rapport with each other and were able to use the different movement tools we had practiced in previous sessions. Contact Improvisation, weight-bearing, negative space, and use of compositional ideas all come naturally to the group in the score framework. In this exercise, they

had an ease and a directness in their interactions and explorations, indicating the establishment of a movement community. They understood how the other participants move individually and how to work together. Through completing activities, they now knew what was required as individuals to make the group act successful, fun, and interesting.

The development of community was also clear in the verbal and other informal interactions of the group. When they arrived in the room for our sixth and final small group

session, there was a noticeable higher level of familiarity with the other people, the studio space, and the workshop happenings as compared to the first session. Everyone, including myself, was more at ease due to knowing the expectations and the workshop format. Some of the group members had previous friendships with some other members, but I was the only one who knew everyone else previously. Through this series of workshops, we have gotten to know each other better primarily through moving together as opposed to through verbal conversation. During the filmed interviews, everyone described an increased sense of closeness to each of the group members, and I feel the same way. For me, the community of the group dynamic provided me a safe space to investigate ideas and concepts I am interested in and to truly experiment. Their dedication allowed me to try ideas and gain from moving, observing, and hearing their responses to their experience. In this research, I have felt supported and informed by the participants constantly.

### **Open Workshop Development and Implementation**

The final culminating workshop was open to the public and served as a way for the core participants and myself to share our research from the workshop series. Seven additional students joined the core group and myself in moving, and Associate Professors Shani Collins-Achille and Lisa Race attended and observed. In planning for the final workshop, I chose activities from the workshop series that would be accessible for anyone regardless of dance experience or exposure to improvisation. I was also able to choose activities that I deemed were especially successful and interesting with the small group, or that I was curious to try with a larger group.

As with all the other workshops, I was conscious to start with a warm up and built through to more complex full scores at the end. I also designed an order to touch on the three levels of self, relationship, and community/group work. I started by guiding the eyes closed improvisation from Workshop 5, having people use one specific body part to begin movement and build to full-bodied improvisation. Zoë Davis, a trained rhythmic gymnast with some dance background, instinctively chose to focus on her right knee which was the location of her worst injury. She reflected on her improvisation,

“It was also relieving and freeing that I could do so much movement comfortably without my knee hurting. I almost broke down at one point because it was so beautiful and comforting to know that even if I have this injury that has a long history I can still do so much with it.”

In the first exercise, Zoë was immediately engaged with her physical history and the emotional history paired with it as she discovered her individual creative movement abilities, which was a completely new dance experience for her.

Next, we did the fluid walk leading and following activity from Workshop 2, which again served as an introduction to partnership and to touch. As in its first iteration, I guided the group through playing with speed, exchanging partners, bringing partners to stillness, and letting go of them so they can walk freely with their eyes closed to the next leader. The participants gained comfort with the game of it, which began to cultivate group sense and trust. I chose to have the group do the three most successful scores from the workshop series. We did Martin’s score involving walking and forming lines of three people, Houston-Jones’ score involving walking towards a partner and doing one action score, and Marina’s Freeze score. All were similarly effective and interesting to do and watch with more people. The walking towards score was

especially striking; I was made aware of the variation and possibilities that exist within the simple framework of walking towards, having one interaction, and then walking away.

Differences in speed of walk, speed of action, and use of touch or not were more visible with the larger group. Again, I had the participants step out in pairs to observe. Through both observing



and moving, I was increasingly conscious that each interaction, however abstract, had a sense of existence, narrative, or emotion specific to the physicality of the relationship between the partners.

There is both a sense of freedom and a sense of chance that made this score very satisfying to both do

and watch. Marina's Freeze score was exciting to watch the large group fully commit to and explore. I was pleasantly intrigued by the combination of the newcomers and the core participants worked well together in the open movement score. Again, the participants were bold in their replacements during the frozen pauses. I felt I could have watched the score for a longer amount of time as the collective movement of the open workshop group was establishing and investigating the dynamic of the new group.

I found that the activities I chose to share were accessible and doable for everyone, including those unfamiliar with dance and improvisation. I was pleasantly surprised by how game the new participants were. Everyone completed the tasks with focus and ease. Natalie Calhoun, someone without dance training who joined us, noted that the progression from eyes closed individual movement to moving with others to working as a whole group gave her confidence in the unfamiliar work. The presence of the core group and their familiarity with the

activities in the room made my role as the leader far easier as they served as models for how to participate. The core group had noticeably increased confidence when sharing the space with new people. Beyond the individual shifts in the participants, there was an overall shift in group dynamic simply because there were different people sharing in the work and experience; the beginnings of a



sense of community within this new group arose over the two hours of the workshop. I was nervous about how the activities would translate for a new group, but the presence of the core group community within the new larger group gave me comfort and unspoken support.

## Reflections and Conclusions

I am curious how movement improvisation workshops could be effective in different settings with varying groups of people. What would the outcomes of this research be in different types of community groups? I would be interested to see the response of a movement-based community like a sports team, as well as other types of established groups such as families, spiritual communities, co-workers, and classroom groups. The workshops could help to build closeness between people unfamiliar with each other. A supportive environment is cultivated relatively quickly in movement workshops, which could be useful in actively strengthening community connections. In her observations of my open workshop, Collins-Achille summed up my work as a “practice to build and connect a community of bodies, creating trust and freedom of individual expression.” Through my investigations, I have discovered how individual



creativity of movement in a shared group setting facilitates trust between people and fosters community. Conversely, establishment of community supports self-discovery through expressive movement. Our bodies communicate ourselves as a result of the way our history is stored physically in our tissues and movement habits. We are able to learn about each other through observing each other's movements. I continue to be fascinated by the breadth of the body's capacity for communication in daily life and in dance. I am hugely excited by all that remains to be explored through movement improvisation as a tool for research, self-discovery, and community growth.

**Appendix I: Dance and Improvisation Artist Influences and Sources**

All individuals listed here are independent artists/choreographers/improvisers in addition to their academic affiliations.

Chris Aiken

Assistant Professor of Dance, Smith College, Northampton, MA

Carol Bartlett (deceased),

Artistic Director of Peabody Preparatory Dance Department, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

David Dorfman

Professor of Dance, Connecticut College, New London, CT

Curt Haworth

Associate Professor of Dance, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Heidi Henderson

Associate Professor of Dance, Connecticut College, New London, CT

Kathleen Hermesdorf

Lecturer in Dance, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA

Ishmael Houston-Jones

Chief Curator at Danspace Project, New York, NY

Kellie Lynch

Adjunct Professor of Dance, Connecticut College, New London, CT

Nina Martin

Assistant Professor of Dance, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX

Lisa Race

Associate Professor of Dance, Connecticut College, New London, CT

## Appendix II: Workshop Design Notes

February 7, 2016  
**Workshop #1: Introductions** (2 hours) \*music

**Names** → w/ movement of some kind (1st instinct)  
 - welcome ideas  
 - safety → What impression is for me (everything)  
 - starting on back → playground  
 - space for movement  
 - artistic pieces

**Warm up** → eyes closed  
 - body as paintbrush  
 - soft balloons under arm  
 - imagery  
 - task = continuous movement  
 - ANYTHING  
 - what do you want to do?  
 - does your body

eventually find stillness → small dance

**Body** → Across the floor:  
 low to high  
 high to low  
 Space  
 Time

**Nooding**  
 Personal pace → slowest, fastest, normal pace

**Gravity**  
 up & down  
 different time

**Toning**  
 tension  
 loose, tight, hard  
 how much do you need?

**Shape**  
 Follow the leader  
 Nina Martin →  
 3 in a line, then dissolve

**Discussion** → 15 minutes

**Last thing** → back to the back  
 "Feel how you feel after having that dance." 111

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February 11, 2016  
**Workshop #2: Trust exercises** → Duets  
 working with one person the whole time?

**Names** → repeat name game w/ same movement as last week

**eyes closed leading**

**Warm up**

- trust falls

- creative movement? → dancing together at different distances  
 → negative space  
 → following touch, moving away from touch

- Ishmael's exercise? → moving together across the floor  
 • be influenced  
 • don't be influenced  
 → Copying (attention to another's physicality)  
 → 1 person watching

Building to → open duet?  
 paying attention  
 touch or not

**Closing** → 1 person moving, 1 person stopping them  
 → later?

**Discussion** → 15 minutes

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February 21, 2016  
**Workshop #3: Whole group**

**Warm up** → eyes closed stillness  
 → 3 ways of seeing → explorations of space?  
 • 3 in a line, then it dissolves  
 • triangulation → equilateral Δ (don't be obvious)  
 ↳ ideally finds stillness  
 ↳ emphasize ways to receive weight  
 ↳ ways to lift & hold

② trust fall circle  
 group lifting → huddle (same feet)  
 ↳ also they can be active or passive  
 ↳ gift of contact required  
 ↳ flocking / follow the leader  
 ↳ pairs → 4s → whole  
 ↳ build to full group negative space dancing

③ "falling" score  
 ↳ trust falls → in pairs  
 ↳ "me" score  
 ↳ could these work with 8 people?  
 ↳ frequency, timing

**Scores**  
 - Walk, run, sit, stand, lie down  
 - "me", "falling", both

**Discussion** → 15-20 minutes

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Thursday March 10, 2016  
**Workshop #4: Contact Improvisation**

**Warm up** → walk around noticing eye colors  
 find a partner → ~~body work~~  
 come back to back  
 eyes closed  
 → percentages  
 10% 30% 50% 70%  
 → rolling point of contact

rolling into the floor  
 tables  
 body surfing  
 → human jungle gym  
 using idea of percentages  
 pouring in & out  
 (standing under dancer)

5:45  
 → Body work  
 • feeling weight of head & each limb  
 • exploring body as a physical object

**Discussion** → 20 min  
 6:30-6:45 (6:05-6:45)

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**Workshop #5 : Memory** Sunday, March 27, 2016 8-10 pm

**Warm Up** draw a map of your life highlights & low lights  
 ↓  
 choose a place that evokes a specific memory  
 ↓  
 eyes closed: improvise, embodying that memory explore where it is stored in the body

Ishmael Houston Jones' exercise: walk partners backwards, eyes closed  
Describe a person (not in the room, not who the other person knows)  
 close to you  
 10 min each  
 5 min (at least) each

Improvise movement  
 stream  
 describe  
 whatever

**Closing** laying down eyes closed  
 choose a body part think of a memory  
 ↓  
 move it what memory comes up  
 → where the memory of today's experience may be situated

Playing w/ "desired future"  
 ↳ preparing body for action but not necessarily completing it

**Walking towards + action score**

**Discussion** 15-20 min

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**Workshop #6 : Co-research** Sunday, April 3, 2016

**Warm Up** → Senait's flocking

Small dance  
 ↳ from life and interests  
 preferably a movement exercise to go with it/to lead or co-lead w/ me  
 could be a discussion topic

Everyone bring an idea

**Paul** → 1 partner eyes closed, stillness embodying 1 emotion ~ 2 min  
 other partner begins to investigate through contact  
 eventually becomes moving contact  
 what can the partner learn about the emotional state of the eyes closed other?

**Spencer** → score with claps  
 2 establishing group unison  
 eventually claps leave  
 group mind unison  
 dissolves to compositional score w/ moves created

**Roy** → human jungle gym  
 7 line with 6

**Senait** → Flocking  
 4 run, walk, stand  
 fill body movement

**Kira** → trio score  
 5 2 groups of 3, 1 person out  
 has to read dynamic of group + enter + bump someone out

**Marina** → ~~freeze~~ Freeze score  
 group of 5, 2 out → can call freeze + replacements  
 5 min  
 group of 6, 2 out → 5 min

**Discussion** throughout

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**Open Workshop : Sharing process with others** Thursday, April 7, 2016 4:30-6:30 pm

10 min opening  
 ↳ photographs/video associated topic  
 ↳ body I'm interested in  
 ↳ movement research → movement

**Warm up:** laying down on back, eyes closed  
 choose body part → think of its history, move from there

Small dance  
 ↳ reference Paulin

• walk around into 3 in a line score

• Blind leading  
 ↳ changing partners score after awhile?  
 depositing → stand still

• Walking towards score  
 ↳ reference Ishmael Houston Jones

↳ Break out  
 ↳ needing eyes open  
 ↳ recall eyes closed movement  
 ↳ name gesture  
 ↳ back to chosen body part  
 ↳ initiating bigger movement  
 ↳ changing initiations

• Marina freeze score  
 small groups  
 group start watching

**Discussion: 15 minutes**  
 responses  
 questions

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### **Appendix III: Dance 107 Student Recorded Interview Questions**

- What is your movement practice history? Dance, sports, running, etc.?
- What has your personal growth been like over your time in the course?
- What have you learned about yourself physically? Habits, routines, dance-wise or other movement-wise?
- What have you learned about other students in this course? Through moving with them, through working in the variety of ways we have?
- Talk about what changes, if any, you've notice in the class group?
- What patterns have you observed in your movement choices?
- Are they related to your movement/physical history?
- Has anything about the physical experience in this class surprised you?
- Are there things you've learned in the class that you think you'll carry forward? In particular, nonverbal communication awareness/skills?

### **Appendix IV: Workshop Series Participant Filmed Interview Questions**

- What was your personal physical experience like in the workshops? How does that fit into the overall trajectory of your experience?
- Was there one exercise or workshop that stands out for you most and why?
- Describe your relationships with the other participants. How have those changed through these workshops?
- Talk about the group dynamic over time.
- Talk about community in this process and context.
- What have been the takeaways from this experience for you?
- What questions or things are you left thinking about?

### **Appendix V: Workshop Documentary Film Information**

A supplemental documentary film entitled “Moving from Self to Community: A Movement Improvisation Workshop Series” is available at the following link on Youtube.com and as a media DVD on file at the Connecticut College Archives. The film was filmed and edited by Maia Draper-Reich and Grace Finley.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SPk9kdnJYQ&feature=youtu.be>

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